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## OFFICES WOULD MAKE UP NEW 700-ACRE RENTSCHLER FIELD

**EAST HARTFORD** -- The proposed massive development at *Rentschler Field* would be complementary to, rather than competitive with, Adriaen's Landing a short distance across the river, officials said.

Planners for the Rentschler development have purposely avoided duplicating the proposals for a convention center and retail stores in Hartford. While a retail mall had once been considered for the East Hartford site, no retail stores are included under the latest proposal by the Boston real estate firm of Spaulding & Slye Colliers.

After more than a year of behind-the-scenes planning, the latest vision for the 700-acre *Rentschler Field* calls for 3.75 million square feet of space for offices, light manufacturing, and research and development under the name of The Rentschler Center for Global Innovation.

"It's totally different from Adriaen's Landing," said U.S. Rep. John B. Larson, an East Hartford Democrat who has been pushing for the Rentschler development for more than two years.

The proposed housing at the two sites is also different. At Rentschler, the single-family homes would likely not be constructed until 10 years into a 15-year project, said David Vickery, a partner in Spaulding & Slye Colliers. The homes would be geared toward the engineers and other professionals working at the 700-acre complex.

Across the river, none of the homes at Adriaen's Landing would be single-family, detached houses. Instead, about 1,000 units of housing would be built in a downtown setting as apartments or condominiums.

If the Rentschler site reaches its full potential with 8,000 new employees in a science and technology park, the Hartford convention center would become more likely to attract science-related conventions.

Vickery, a former consultant to United Technologies who is the potential developer of the Rentschler site, said he sees no competition at all with the Hartford development.

"It's a very strong enhancement of it, particularly if we can get some bus loops over there," Vickery said.

Regarding the recruitment of corporations to fill as much as 3 million square feet of office space in East Hartford, Vickery said he would not be attempting to draw Connecticut companies and simply shift workers from other locations throughout the Greater Hartford region.

"We absolutely are looking at corporations out-of-state," he said. "The site is broken out into a series of campuses. You could have three, four or five corporations on that site adding up to 3 million-plus square feet. Our first foray is to look at larger companies that want 400,000 to 600,000 square feet, as opposed to 50 small buildings."

Spaulding & Slye Colliers, he said, specializes in campus-type developments and has worked with major corporations, such as IBM and Sun Microsystems.

"The success of *Rentschler Field* would have a positive effect on Adriaen's Landing," said Elliot A. Ginsberg, Larson's chief of staff. "The approach is to create something that is not competitive."

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## I-84 FLYOVER RAMP SEEN AS A PATH TO JOBS

When East Hartford's legislative delegation demanded more than \$50 million in road improvements last year before supporting the University of Connecticut's new football stadium in their town, Gov. John G. Rowland was upset.

The town, after all, was essentially receiving a free stadium at historic *Rentschler Field* because Hartford-based United Technologies Corp. was donating 75 acres for the stadium site.

"At one point, they all came into my office moaning and groaning," Rowland said recently. "They wanted \$57 million to do some transportation [improvements]. I said, 'It's not going to happen.' I said to them, 'I've got three other cities that are interested in the stadium. I will give you until 5 o'clock to tell me whether you want the stadium or not.' So the mayor and the delegation said, 'We'll get back to you.' So at about 4 o'clock, he calls me back and says, 'We'll take the stadium.'"

The rest is history: the delegation backed off, and the 40,000-seat, open-air stadium was approved by the legislature.

Now, one year later, the same delegation is back with another plan for road improvements.

Sen. Gary LeBeau, an East Hartford Democrat who co-chairs the legislature's commerce committee, pushed a bill that passed unanimously through the committee last week, to spend \$3.5 million in state bond money to plan and design a flyover ramp at the Silver Lane exit of I-84. The ramp, estimated to cost \$15 million to \$20 million, would allow cars to head directly into the stadium site near Silver Lane.

"It's a rather cramped exit," LeBeau said, referring to the intersection that is marked by a distinctive cube at the Pratt and Whitney entrance. "It's going to be intricate to put it above Silver Lane."

LeBeau concedes that a flyover ramp would be overly expensive if it was for a stadium that will be used for only five or six college games a year.

"You can't justify a flyover ramp for that," he said.

The stadium alone is expected to generate only 84 permanent jobs, according to an economic study. But LeBeau envisions a day when the entire *Rentschler Field* site is developed with offices and stores that generate 8,000 to 9,000 jobs. Those plans have not been formally announced, but the lawmakers cast their committee votes with a look toward the future.

"The chances of this bill going through are very good," LeBeau said. "It's not just pork-barrel for East Hartford. It has regional implications for jobs."

But even if everything proceeded on schedule, the flyover would probably not be ready until one year after the stadium's scheduled opening in August 2003, he said.

Rowland's spokesman, Dean Pagani, said the flyover and road improvements still would not make financial sense unless there is substantial construction beyond the 75-acre stadium parcel.

"The governor left the option open [for road improvements] if there was further development on the *Rentschler Field* site," Pagani said. "We should wait to see what that development would be before we start building roads."

UConn is expected to suffer losing seasons for several years as it shifts to a full schedule against Division I-A teams. Until then, the potential traffic at the intersection is unknown.

LeBeau predicted that the first game at the new stadium -- against Rutgers -- would be a sellout with 40,000 fans. But a private consultant's study projects the team's average home attendance would be only 18,000 fans through 2005 and then 21,000 when the team starts playing a full Big East Conference schedule in 2006.

LeBeau's transportation bill will now go to the legislature's finance and transportation committees before heading to the full House of Representatives and Senate. If it passes, the bill still would need Rowland's signature to become law.

For the record, Rowland was asked which towns were waiting in the wings for the stadium, the bargaining chip that caused the East Hartford delegation to back off from its original highway demands.

"Of course, do you think I really had the three cities?" Rowland asked. "No way!"

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Correction was published Saturday March 31, 2001 on Page A2.

The Boston real estate firm that has worked as a consultant on the proposed development of *Rentschler Field* in East Hartford is Spaulding & Slye Colliers. The firm's name was misspelled in a story and graphic on Page 1 Thursday.

### **HUGE PROJECT PLANNED AT RENTSCHLER ROAD APPROVALS KEY TO EAST HARTFORD 'GLOBAL INNOVATION CENTER'**

**EAST HARTFORD** -- The vision is very large, but so is the property.

After more than a year of behind-the-scenes planning and \$1 million spent on consultants and studies, developers have created a plan they say would transform the 700-acre *Rentschler Field* into a thriving research campus for 8,000 new employees.

The vision calls for constructing 3.75 million square feet of space for offices, light manufacturing and research during the next 15 years -- all under the name of The Rentschler Center for Global Innovation.

If built, the development would be the largest in Greater Hartford in recent years and would generate \$18 million in annual taxes for East Hartford. It would contain more corporate space than New York City's Empire State Building, which has 2.1 million square feet.

The biggest hitch, officials said, is that the project will not be built unless the state agrees to spend an estimated \$25 million to \$30 million to construct two new roads and a flyover ramp that would bring commuters directly onto the property from I-84.

"You really can't build very much there without the flyover," said David Vickery, a partner in the Boston real estate firm of Spaulding & Slye Collier, the potential developer of the site. "We do have a chicken-and-egg situation. If the state legislature commits to building the roads, we strongly believe that

corporations would relocate there."

The legislature's commerce committee has already voted unanimously to spend \$3.5 million to plan and design the flyover ramp that would rise above Silver Lane at the property's northern boundary. Commuters currently enter the Pratt & Whitney property off the Silver Lane exit on I-84 at an intersection that is marked by a distinctive cube bearing the logo of Pratt's parent, United Technologies Corp.

The \$3.5 million flyover plan still requires approval by the legislature's finance and transportation committees, as well as the state House of Representatives and Senate.

Dean Pagani, a spokesman for Gov. John G. Rowland, said Wednesday night that Rowland would consider state funding for the proposal if he can be persuaded that the overall plan is economically feasible.

"The governor has not been presented with any detailed proposals on the development of *Rentschler Field*," Pagani said. "He hasn't been shown anything that is concrete in any way that he could make an informed decision."

Saying the development is still in the planning stages, both Vickery and the property owner -- Hartford-based United Technologies Corp. -- declined to release any sketches or renderings of the proposed development. Neither side is prepared to make any formal announcements. Some details, though, began to spill out during the commerce committee's public hearing last week regarding the bill to design the road improvements.

"It's not ready to be rolled out to the public," said Vickery, whose firm has worked as a consultant to United Technologies. "We're not trying to hide anything. We're also being cautious that people shouldn't think anything is happening tomorrow."

If everything goes according to plan, the earliest groundbreaking for the research park would likely be in July or August 2003. That is the same time that the University of Connecticut's new football stadium -- at the northern end of the Pratt & Whitney property near Silver Lane -- is scheduled to open.

The proposal calls for spending more than \$600 million in private investments and about \$30 million in government funds. This is far different from the proposed Adriaen's Landing development in downtown Hartford, which is largely a publicly funded project.

Once the offices are built, the developers envision an on-site day-care center and hotel with suites for workers sent to the research park for training. The planners are also calling for about 100 to 150 single-family homes that would be marketed to employees who work on the East Hartford site, but the homes would probably not be built for about 10 years, Vickery said. The

homes, he said, are "certainly not a high priority" and would be constructed only after the offices and light manufacturing space. The proposal also calls for new bicycle and walking trails throughout the 700-acre site and eventually a bus loop that would connect the site with downtown Hartford.

But the overall proposal, Vickery said, will work only under a partnership with governmental agencies.

"The costs associated with these improvements are greater than the market could support in the form of rent or an outright land sale," Vickery said.

Charles Veley, the director of global real estate for United Technologies, told legislators that UTC would donate the land for the new roads to be built -- in the same way that the company donated the land for the UConn stadium that is under construction.

Peter Murphy, a spokesman for UTC, confirmed that the company has spent \$1 million on consultants for the property.

Spaulding & Slye Collier has recommended that creating a science and research park "is probably the best use of the land," Murphy said, saying that only Vickery would speak about the details. "Development is out of our bailiwick."

U.S. Rep. John B. Larson, an East Hartford Democrat who has been working on developing the now-closed airfield for more than two years, said he believes the plan is far more than a series of architectural drawings.

"I definitely think it's going to happen," Larson said Wednesday. "We feel we have an opportunity to create a world-class economic hub that's focused on aerospace. What better place than *Rentschler Field*?"

Larson, along with Sens. Christopher J. Dodd and Joseph I. Lieberman, had been working closely with President Clinton's administration in an attempt to get NASA to become part of the development.

But Larson said the project has recently lost momentum under the new Republican administration of President Bush.

"We're not moving as fast as we would have been if there was a Democratic administration," Larson said Wednesday. "But I'm confident it's going to move forward. With patience and persistence, I think *Rentschler Field* will be a reality."

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GRAPHIC: (COLOR), THE HARTFORD COURANT

Caption: GRAPHIC: PROPOSED RENTSCHLER CENTER

\* Developers Spaulding and Slye Collier propose to create an campus-like group of corporate buildings newr the University of Connecticut football stadium now under construction on the *Rentschler Field* property in East Hartford.

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